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FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4000  
INFO RUEHJB/AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA 0046  
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM 0857  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1582  
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0201  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0831  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0222

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [RW](#)  
SUBJECT: FORMER PRESIDENT BIZIMUNGU RELEASED FROM PRISON

¶1. (U) Summary. The Government of Rwanda released former President Pasteur Bizimungu from prison on April 6. This release apparently occurred without prior notice to the public and without condition. Coming thirteen years to the day from the start of the 1994 genocide, and on Good Friday, this release appears to be a goodwill gesture to the Rwandan people and the international community. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Embassy personnel on private business observed the release of former President Bizimungu from the central Kigali "1930" prison on the afternoon of Good Friday, a local holiday (the prison is located close to major commercial areas of the city). Police drove Bizimungu, accompanied by his wife and his attorney, to his Kigali residence for a quiet reunion with friends and family members. Bizimungu, a Hutu, had been in jail since his 2004 conviction on several counts, including embezzlement and incitement of civil disobedience. The release was not announced to the public.

¶3. (SBU) Reached later in the day by polchief, Bizimungu's attorney said that the release, which he termed a presidential pardon, was done "without precondition." The attorney had no information on the status of Bizimungu's codefendant, former transport minister Ntakirutinka, but believed him to be still in custody. "This is a process," said the attorney, and "we hope Ntakirutinka will be next."

¶4. (SBU) Comment. Post was unable to confirm conditions of release or other information from government personnel. Some had traveled for the three-day Easter weekend, others had their mobile phones turned off. This low-key release of Bizimungu comes on the eve of the April 7 nationwide genocide memorial ceremonies -- April 6 marks the date in 1994 that unknown parties shot down the plane carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, and April 7 the actual start of the three-month genocide. These dates are heavy with national remembrance and sorrow, and Bizimungu's release appears to represent a goodwill gesture by the Government of Rwanda to its people and the international community. End Comment.  
THURSTON